

عِلْمُ النَحْوِ

Grammatical States

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Grammatical States

The physical appearance of people changes based on a given situation. When one goes out in public they don't wear the same thing they would when they are at home and vice versa. In Arabic Grammar, a word changes based on

(1) Its role in a sentence

and/or

(2) How it interacts with another word.

What changes in a word?

The end of the word reflects the state of the word in Arabic. Let's for instance take the word "the teacher"

i.e. المُدَرِّس

The word المُدَرِّس is used in 3 separate sentences below, and its role in the sentences differs:

جَاءَ المُدَرِّسُ

(The teacher came)

سَأَلْتُ المُدَرِّسَ

(I asked the teacher)

سَلَّمْتُ عَلَى المُدَرِّسِ

(I greeted the teacher)

The reason for these changes or effects produced at the end of "المُدَرِّس" is to distinguish the different grammatical roles or functions that a word like "المُدَرِّس" acquires when placed in a sentence. Prior to its existence in the sentence, "المُدَرِّس" had no other meaning apart from "the teacher". However, when it was placed after the verb "جَاءَ" it acquired the grammatical role of being the one performing the action indicated by that verb i.e. the one doing the coming. Likewise, when it was placed after the verb "سَأَلْتُ" it

acquired the grammatical role of being the direct object of the action indicated by that verb i.e. the one to whom asking is done directly. Also, when it was placed after the preposition "عَلَى" it acquired the grammatical role of being the indirect object of the action of the verb "سَلَّمْتُ" since the verb is connected indirectly to the object i.e. via the particle (or more specifically the preposition) "عَلَى" .

In Arabic grammar there are 4 states that a word can be in:

رفع - the nominative case. (فعل مضارع and إسم)

نصب - the accusative case. (فعل مضارع and إسم)

جر - the genitive case. (إسم only)

جزم - the jussive case. (فعل مضارع only)

Only the فعل مضارع (present/future tense verb) can change its state.

The حرف does not have a grammatical state but can only influence a إسم or فعل مضارع to be in one of these four states.

Unlike English, the factor that determines the role of a word in the sentence is **NOT** the position of it. For example if we said:

A boy hit Zaid

Zaid hit a boy

We changed the position of the words to change the doer of the act and the object.

In Arabic if we change the position of the doer and the object it doesn't change the meaning:

ضَرَبَ زَيْدٌ وَلَدًا

ضَرَبَ وَلَدًا زَيْدٌ

Both mean Zaid hit a boy

Declension

The name given to this process is إعراب. Therefore, إعراب is the process by which grammatical states are reflected on the last letter of words by change in vowelling or lettering, either explicitly or assumed.

The 2 division of words

معرب vs. مبني

The parts of speech which experience 'إعراب' are معرب (declinable) and those which don't are مبني (indeclinable).

مبني: All حروف

معرب 30% and مبني 70%: أفعال

مبني 20%, معرب 80%: أسماء

We will explain this in greater detail in future lessons.